

## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2019 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

**Present:** Councillor Campbell (Chairman); Councillors R Bayford, Coleman-Cooke, Gregory, Hopkinson, Huxley, Pat Moore, Paul Moore, L Piper, Roper, Rusiecki, Scott, Tomlinson and Towing

**In Attendance:** Councillors Bailey, Green, D Saunders, M Saunders, Wright and Yates

### 195. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor Bayford proposed, Councillor Huxley seconded and Members agreed that Councillor Campbell be the Chairman for this meeting.

Councillor Campbell in the Chair.

Mr Coombes spoke under public speaking procedure rules.

### 196. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The following apologies were received:

Councillor Boyd, substituted by Councillor Towing;  
Councillor Albon, substituted by Councillor Huxley;  
Councillor Parsons, substituted by Councillor Bayford;  
Councillor Everitt, substituted by Councillor Hopkinson;  
Councillor Whitehead, substituted by Councillor Pat Moore.

### 197. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

### 198. MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

Councillor L Piper proposed, Councillor Rusiecki seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the extraordinary meeting that was held on 15 August 2019.

### 199. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor L Piper proposed, Councillor Rusiecki seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting that was held on 27 August 2019.

### 200. CRIME STATS FOR THANET

Chief Inspector Ed Ruffle introduced the subject for discussion and made the following comments:

- The report provided information on crime statistics for the district as from 2016 onwards;
- Kent Police crime data capture was outstanding, with a level of over 96% crime data integrity;
- Crime had come down this year from a summer peak in 2018;

- Thanet was witnessing increasing tourism and growth in summer which was creating demand on resources;
- Victim based crime was defined as those affecting identifiable victims, such as violence against the person. Crimes against the state such as possession of drugs, weapons and public order offences are not included in this category;
- Violence against the person was the highest form of crime in the district, followed by theft, arson and criminal damage, sexual offences and robbery;
- The figures had declined in volume in comparison to previous years, especially violence against the person theft, sexual offences and criminal damage;
- Vehicle crime in the district was increasing in volume and proportion, particularly theft from vehicles;
- Moped crime and theft using mopeds was contributing the largest proportion to this form of crime. This included theft of mopeds;
- The Police were working on an operation to respond to this problem;
- ASB had started to increase since the beginning of this year, particularly in Margate and Ramsgate;
- This was expected to increase in summer;
- Broadstairs had witnessed an increase in ASB;
- 'Thirsty Thursday' had increased ASB in Ramsgate;
- Northwood Ward had witnessed increased ASB maybe due to its proximity to Westwood Cross;
- Generally where there was free Wi-Fi, there was an increase in youth crime (ASB);
- Police had been in discussions with some businesses about this issue regarding free Wi-Fi and managing ASB;
- Hate crime on the rise. It's important for the public to report this crime. Most of that crime was related to race and ethnicity;
- Stop and search was now used more often. The Police had grown in confidence to this approach. When used properly it worked, particularly for knife crimes;
- There had been an increase in domestic offences where knives were involved.

Responding to the presentation, Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

- What types of ASB crimes were being committed in Broadstairs?
- Broadstairs suffered ASB incidents committed by individuals from outside Broadstairs;
- Ramsgate Town Council had suggested that strategies for combating ASB, including setting up bollards. However residents were advised that they had to continue to report ASB incidents. The question was what was that information used for?
- Why were Thanet villages crime stats not in the report?
- Requested that the slides presentation be circulated to Members;
- What was the relationship between the Police and licensed premises that sell alcohol to manage reported incidents, including from such promotions like 'Thirsty Thursday?'
- Six to seven years ago TDC tried to engage businesses to encourage them to stop selling cheap alcohol. However this was not successful as businesses were unwilling to comply;
- Could future performance reports include successful prosecutions and other Police initiatives to prevent crime in the district;
- How did crime stats in Thanet compare to other areas with similar types of crime?

Chief Inspector Ruffle responded as follows:

- He was currently studying the information and familiarising himself with the issues affecting the district, particularly around the local night time economy, summer activities and Westwood Cross.
- The town centre constabulary establishment had been increased. The Police were keen to use resources in the most effective way in order to respond to where problems were most prevalent at any time;
- Thanet was becoming more popular and had seen increased investment in the area;
- The district was attracted youth from London and this had increased crime;
- Last year, the police responded to reported ASB incidents by increasing policing for night time economy. These reports included incidents reported by residents and business establishments;
- Police would explore approaches like working with licensed premises and TDC on encouraging responsible drinking;
- Pub watch and schemes used elsewhere would be explored;
- Future reports to the Panel would include information on successful prosecutions.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Ruffle and Members noted the report.

**201. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATION - FEES & CHARGES PROPOSALS FOR 2020/21**

Councillor Yates, Cabinet Member for Financial Services & Estates introduced the item for discussion and made the following points:

- The proposed overall increase to fees and charges was 2.5%. This would contribute about £208k towards the 2020/21 council budget;
- The council was still experiencing financial pressure;
- Officers had been tasked to study and identify best practices being used elsewhere by other councils in order to enable council to creatively adopt any such practices to meet set objectives, particularly those relating to how the budget gap could be closed;
- Any identified new initiatives would be discussed through cross party engagement before adoption;
- The Panel was being asked to review the proposals in the report. Any recommendations from the Panel would be discussed with the group leaders in order to ensure that these ideas are adopted collaboratively and were subject to appropriate scrutiny.

Responding to the presentation Panel Members and Councillor Bailey speaking under Council Procedure 20.1 made comments and asked questions as follows the following:

- It is good to know that the car parking charges for Joss Bay Marina have been reduced. However this left three of the most expensive car parks still in Broadstairs;
- Were the residents only daily voucher scheme of £2.60 are the same as the seasonal parking vouchers for these expensive car parks, which are Chandos Street, Harbour Street and Albion Street?
- Was that the same scheme that has been used for the last couple of years?
- It was also good to see permits for hoteliers increased from 20 this year to 40 in the new financial year. However why was there a difference in the charges? Hoteliers in Ramsgate would have to pay £3.50 and those in Broadstairs would have to pay £6.00. Why was it the case?
- Applauded the initiative for reduction of car parking charges in Lawn Road in Broadstairs, particularly the free parking for the first 30 minutes. It would be even better if such an offer was given to parking in the high streets;

- There hadn't been an increase for charges relating to corporate marketing for the last seven or eight years. This could be an area of comparatively easy income. Why was that the case?
- The charges for the enforcement for unauthorised waste collection had not been changed since January 2017, when it was set at £400. Increasing that charge would have sent a strong message about the consequences of fly-tipping. Why was that the case?
- What areas did the Fees and Charges Cabinet Advisory Group concentrate on and what recommendations did they come up with? What did the Portfolio Holder incorporate into the fees and charges proposals that came from the CAG?
- Regarding the best practice ideas, which local councils were officers asked to go to and what specific areas were they asked to study? Would the new best practice ideas be presented to the Panel before adoption?
- Why was the proposed Wellington Crescent residents car parking scheme not in the schedule of fees and charges?
- The events application fee was being proposed for a 4% increase. This could be viewed as a disincentive for the volunteers who host these events. Could this be not kept at the same level, with a 0% increase?

Councillor Yates, Tim Willis and Chris Blundell, Head of Financial Services responded as follows:

- The issue regarding the residents only car parking voucher scheme and the different charges for hoteliers would be responded to in writing after the meeting;
- On the proposed charges for unauthorised waste collection, the portfolio holder would hold cross party discussions to see if there was any possibility for increasing that fee;
- Corporate marketing charges were flexible, the minimum was set out here and the charges would be on a case by case basis;
- Searching for best practice ideas would ensure council incorporated the best ideas possible for achieving the newly set corporate objectives before finalising the council budget;
- At the cabinet advisory group, the focus was on car parking charges. Members considered expanding the use of automatic number plate recognition to improve collection of car parking charges;
- For any changes that would be made to the proposed fees and charges when these proposals were presented to Cabinet, the Panel could call-in the Cabinet decision to review those changes;
- The public consultation regarding the proposed Wellington Crescent residents car parking permits was completed. Council was now waiting for the installation of the machines to implement the scheme and that scheme would be in the updated list of linear charges category.

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Tomlinson seconded and Members recommended that Cabinet considered not to increase the events application fee, thereby keeping it at £75.

## **202. REVIEWING THE OSP WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2019/20**

The Chairman invited Ms Suzanne Brimm, speaking under public speaking procedure rules to address the Panel.

Speaking under 20.1 Councillor Bailey requested that the Panel conducts a review into Council's governance arrangements with a view to considering the adoption of a committee system.

Mr Willis advised that since this was a council function, it would be more appropriate to table that initiative at a full council meeting and if supported by Members, a council working party on governance arrangements could be set up to review the issue.

The Chairman invited Members to comment on the work programme. Councillor Lynda Piper proposed, Councillor Paul Moore seconded and Members agreed to invite Councillor Whitehead, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods to make a presentation (in January 2020) on the future management of council housing stock. The presentation would concentrate on providing an update on the preferred option to bring council housing stock into council management.

There being no further comments from the Panel, Members noted the report.

**203. FORWARD PLAN & EXEMPT CABINET REPORT LIST**

Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 8.36 pm